

3. THE LIFE OF AESCHYLUS¹

[p.1] Aeschylus the tragic poet's nationality was Athenian; his deme Eleusis. He was the son of Euphorion, the brother of Cynegirus. His family was aristocratic. He began writing tragedies when he was a young man and he raised standards far above his predecessors, in writing and in staging, [5] in the splendour of his choral productions, in his actors' costumes and in the serious content of his choral songs. As Aristophanes says:

Oh you who first piled up serious speeches and crowned tragic talk. [*Ran.* 1004]

He was a contemporary of Pindar's, having been born in the sixty-fourth Olympiad. They say that he was heroic and that he fought in the battle of Marathon [10] along with his brother Cynegirus, and in the naval battle at Salamis along with his

¹ Ed. Page 1972.

younger brother Ameinias, and also in the infantry battle at Plataea.

In the composition of his poetry he strove for a grand style, by using compound words and epithets, [15] and also metaphors and every other device that could lend weight to his diction. The plots of his plays do not abound in reversals and complexities like those of later poets, for he aimed solely at investing his characters with dignity. He thought that heroic grandeur struck the proper archaic note, [20] but that cunning ingenuity and sententiousness were foreign to tragedy. It was for this reason that Aristophanes made fun of him in his comedies, because of his stress on the excessive dignity of his characters. For example, in the *Niobe*, Niobe sits silent by her children's tomb for three scenes with her head covered, and does not utter a word; and in the *Ransom of Hector* [25] Achilles with his head covered similarly does not utter anything except a few words [p.2] at the beginning, in conversation with Hermes. For this reason one could find many outstanding illustrations of his striking dramatic contrivances but few aphorisms or pathetic scenes or other effects calculated to produce tears. He used visual effects and plots [5] more to frighten and amaze than to trick his audience.

He went off to stay with Hieron, according to some authorities, because he was criticised by the Athenians and defeated by Sophocles when the latter was a young man, but according to others because he was defeated by Simonides in an elegy for those who died at Marathon. Elegy in particular needs to have the conciseness necessary to arouse emotion, [10] and Aeschylus' poem (as the story goes) was not suitable. Some say that during the performance of the *Eumenides*, when he brought the chorus on one by one, he so frightened the audience that children fainted and unborn infants were aborted.

Then he went to Sicily at the time that Hieron was founding the city Aetna and put on the *Women of Aetna*, [15] as a favourable portent for a good life for the people living in the city. He was also greatly honoured both by Hieron and by the people of Gela, and after living there for two years he died, an old man, in the following way: an eagle had caught a tortoise, and because it did not have the strength to get control of its prey

threw it down on some rocks in order to break its shell. But the tortoise fell instead [20] on the poet and killed him. For he had received an oracle: 'Something thrown from the sky will kill you.' After his death the people of Gela buried him richly in the city's cemetery and honoured him extravagantly by writing the following epigram:

This tomb in grainbearing Gela covers an Athenian, Aeschylus son of Euphorion, who died here. [25] The famous grove of Marathon could tell of his courage and the longhaired Mede knew it well.

All who made their living in the tragic theatre went to his tomb to offer sacrifices and recited their plays there.

The Athenians [p.3] liked Aeschylus so much that they voted after his death to award a golden crown to whoever was willing to put on one of his dramas. He lived sixty-three years, during which time he wrote seventy dramas and in addition about five satyr plays. [5] He won quite a few victories after his death.

Aeschylus was first to enhance tragedy with highly heroic effects and to decorate the stage and to astound his audience's eyes with splendour, through pictures and devices, with altars and tombs, trumpets, images and Furies. He equipped the actors with gloves and dignified them with long robes and [10] elevated their stance with higher buskins. He used Cleander as first actor; then with him as second actor Mynniscus of Chalcis. It was he who invented the third actor, though Dicaearchus of Messene says it was Sophocles.

If one wanted to compare the simplicity of his dramatic art [15] to dramatists after him, one might think it insignificant and unsophisticated. But if one compared his work to his predecessors, one would be amazed at the poet's intelligence and inventiveness. Anyone who thinks that the most perfect writer of tragedy is Sophocles is correct, but he should remember that it was much harder to bring tragedy to such a height after Thespis, Phrynichus [20] and Choerilus, than it was by speaking after Aeschylus to come to Sophocles' perfection.

There is an inscription on his tomb:

I died, struck on the forehead by a missile from an eagle's claws.

They say that he put on [25] the *Persians* in Sicily at Hieron's request and was highly praised for it.

4. THE LIFE OF SOPHOCLES¹

[1] Sophocles was an Athenian by birth. He was the son of Sophillus who was not a carpenter in spite of what Aristoxenus tells us [fr. 115 Wehrli] nor a bronze-smith, nor a sword-maker by trade in spite of what Ister tells us [*FGrHist* 334F33]. As it happened, his father owned *slaves* who were bronze-smiths and carpenters. For it is not logical that a man descended from a tradesman would be considered worthy of a generalship along with Pericles and Thucydides, who were the most important men in the city. Indeed, if his father had been a tradesman, he would not have got off without abuse from the comic poets. Nor ought one to believe Ister [*FGrHist* 334F34] when he says Sophocles was not an Athenian but rather a Phliasian. Even if Sophocles' family originally came from Phlius, still one cannot find this information in any author other than Ister. In fact Sophocles was an Athenian by birth. His deme was Colonus. He was distinguished both because of his life and his poetry. He was well-educated and raised in comfortable circumstances, and he was involved in government and in embassies abroad.

[2] They say that he was born in the second year of the seventy-first Olympiad, when Philip was archon in Athens [495/4 B.C.]. He was seven years younger than Aeschylus, and twenty-four years older than Euripides.

[3] He trained with other boys both in wrestling and in music, and won crowns for both, as Ister says [*FGrHist* 334F35]. He studied music with Lamprus, and after the naval battle at Salamis, when the Athenians were standing round the victory monument, Sophocles with his lyre, naked and anointed with oil, led the chorus which sang the paean at the victory sacrifice.

¹ Ed. Radt 1977.

[4] He learned about tragedy from Aeschylus. He also was responsible for innovations in the dramatic competitions. He was the first to break the tradition of the poet's acting because his own voice was weak. For in the old days the poet himself served as one of the actors. He changed the number of chorus members from twelve to fifteen and invented the third actor.

[5] They say that he also took up the lyre and that only in the *Thamyris* did he ever sing; on account of this there is a picture of him playing a lyre in the Painted Stoa.

[6] Satyrus says [*FHG* 3.161ff.] that Sophocles invented the crooked staff himself. Ister also says [*FGrHist* 334F36] that he discovered the white half-boots that actors and chorus members wear, and that he wrote his dramas to suit their characters, and that he organised a *thiasos* to the Muses of cultivated people.

[7] In a word, his character was so charming that he was loved everywhere and by everyone.

[8] He won twenty victories, according to Carystius [*FHG* 4.359]. He often won second prize, but never third.

[9] The Athenians elected him general when he was sixty-five years old, seven years before the Peloponnesian war began, in the war against the Anaioi.

[10] He was so loyal to Athens that when many kings sent for him he did not want to leave his country.

[11] He held the priesthood of Halon, who was a hero under Chiron's tutelage along with Asclepius. After Sophocles' death Halon's shrine was maintained by his son Iophon.

[12] Sophocles was more pious than anyone else, according to what Hieronymus says [fr. 31 Wehrli] . . . about his golden crown. When this crown was stolen from the Acropolis, Heracles came to Sophocles in a dream and told him to go into the house on the right and it would be hidden there. Sophocles brought this information to the citizens and received a reward of a talent, as had been announced in advance. He used the talent to establish a shrine of Heracles Informer.

[13] The story is told by many authorities that at some point he brought a lawsuit against his son Iophon. Iophon was his son by Nicostrate, but he had a son Ariston by Theoris of Sicyon, and he was especially fond of this son's child, whose name was Sophocles. Once in a drama he portrayed Iophon

. . . as being envious of him and as making accusations to his clansmen that his father had lost his mind in his old age. They censured Iophon. Satyrus [*FHG* 3.162] says the poet said: 'If I am Sophocles I'm not out of my mind; if I am out of my mind, I'm not Sophocles', and then he produced the *Oedipus*.

[14] Ister [*FGrHist* 334F37] and Neanthes [*FGrHist* 84F18] say he died in the following way. When Callippides the actor came from the workshop in Opus and around the time of the festival of the Choes sent Sophocles a bunch of grapes, and when Sophocles put a grape that was still unripe into his mouth, he choked because of his advanced age and died. Satyrus says [*FHG* 3.162] that when Sophocles was reciting the *Antigone* and came to a passage toward the end of the play that did not have a break or mark for a pause, he strained his voice too much and gave up his life along with his voice. Some say that after he recited the drama, and he was proclaimed winner, he was overcome by joy and died.

[15] His body was placed on top of his ancestral tomb near the road to Deceleia, eleven stades from the city wall. Some say that they put up a statue of a siren in his memory; others, a bronze Cheledon. Since the Spartans were building a wall at this spot against the Athenians, Dionysus appeared to Lysander in a dream and ordered that the man should be buried. When Lysander ignored the dream Dionysus appeared to him a second time with the same message. Lysander then asked some fugitives who had died, and learned that it was Sophocles. So he sent a herald and allowed the Athenians to bury the body.

[16] Lobon says that this epitaph was written on his tomb:

In this tomb I hide Sophocles who won first prize with his tragic art, a most holy figure.

[17] Ister says [*FGrHist* 334F38] the Athenians voted to sacrifice to him each year because of his excellence.

[18] He wrote one hundred and thirty dramas, as Aristophanes says [p. 249, fr. iv N] of which seventeen are spurious.

[19] He competed against Aeschylus, Euripides, Choerilus, Aristias and many others, including his son Iophon.

[20] In general he used Homeric vocabulary. He took his

plots from the direction set by the epic poet and drew on the *Odyssey* for many of his dramas. He gives the etymology of Odysseus' name [*Od.* 19.406ff.] the way Homer did:

I am Odysseus, named correctly for my troubles. For many impious people have been angry [*odysanto*] at me [fr. 965].

He delineated character, elaborated and used contrivances skilfully, reproducing Homer's charm. For this reason a certain Ionian says only Sophocles is a pupil of Homer. Certainly many poets have imitated one of their predecessors or contemporaries, but Sophocles alone culled the best from each. For this reason he was also called 'the bee'. He brought everything together: timing, sweetness, courage, variety.

[21] He knew how to match timing and events, so that he could delineate a whole character from a fraction of a line or from a single speech. This is the greatest mark of poetic skill, to delineate character or effect.

[22] Aristophanes says [fr. 580A Edmonds] that 'a honeycomb sat on him', and elsewhere (T108 Radt) that Sophocles' mouth is smeared with honey.

[23] Aristoxenus says [fr. 79 Wehrli] that he was the first of the Athenian poets to put Phrygian music into his own songs and to mix in the dithyrambic style.

5. THE LIFE OF EURIPIDES¹

Euripides the poet was the son of Mnesarchides, a storekeeper, and of Cleito, a vegetable-seller.² He was an Athenian. He was born in Salamis while Calliades was archon in the seventy-

¹ Ed. Méridier 1929. In the translation of the *Vita* I have followed Méridier's text: a chronological account (1–49), a set of anecdotes (50–113); then a second short biography with comments on the poet's style (114–35). For the reader's convenience footnotes mark correspondences with earlier sources.

² Text of Satyrus from *POxy.* IX 1176, on the advice of S. West 1966, 546–50, though with some modifications to Hunt's translations. For *Vita* 1–44,

fifth Olympiad, the year when the Greeks fought the naval battle against the Persians.³

[5] At first he practised for the pancration or boxing, because his father had understood an oracle to mean that he would win at contests in which crowns were awarded. And they say that he won a victory in games at Athens. Once he understood the oracle's meaning he turned to writing tragedy; he introduced many innovations, prologues, philosophical discourses, displays of rhetoric and recognition scenes, [10] because he attended lectures by Anaxagoras, Prodicus and Protagoras. Socrates [the philosopher] and Mnesilochus appear to have collaborated with him in some of his writings;⁴ as Teleclides says: 'that fellow Mnesilochus is cooking up a new play [15] for Euripides, and Socrates is supplying him with firewood' [fr. 39, 40]. Some authorities say that Iophon or Timocrates of Argos wrote his lyrics.⁵

They say that he was also a painter and that pictures of his are shown at Megara, that he was a torchbearer in the rites of Apollo Zosterius and that he was born on the same day as Hellanicus, [20] which was the day that the Greeks won the naval battle at Salamis, and that he began to compete in dramatic contests at the age of twenty-six. He emigrated to Magnesia and was awarded the privileges of a *proxenos* there and freedom from taxation. From there he went to Macedonia and stayed at the court of Archelaus. [25] As a favour to him he wrote a drama named for him, and he made out very well there because he was also appointed to an administrative post. It is said that he wore a long beard and had moles on his face; that

cf. also the translation of F. A. Paley, *Euripides* 1² (Cambridge 1872) lx–lxii.

Cf. *FGrHist* 328F218: 'It isn't true that his mother was a vegetable-seller, for it happens that both his parents were well-born, as Philochorus demonstrates.'

³ Cf. Jacoby on *FGrHist* 239A50, 63; 244F35.

⁴ Cf. Satyr. fr. 39 col. ii 8–22, citing two lines of dialogue from a drama: '“When this is done in secret, whom do you fear?” “The gods, who see more than men.” Such a conception of the gods will be Socratic; for in truth what is invisible to mortals is to the immortal gods easily seen . . .'

⁵ Cf. Satyr. fr. 39 col. xvi 17–29: 'The verses have the appearance of being by one of his competitors, as you say. But here too the comic poet's attack on Euripides is mischievous.'

his first wife was Melito, his second Choirile. He left three sons: the oldest [30] Mnesarchides, a merchant; the second, Mnesilochus, an actor; the youngest, Euripides, who produced some of his father's dramas.

He began to produce dramas when Callias was archon in the first year of the eighty-first Olympiad [456 B.C.]. First he put on the *Peliades*, with which he won third prize. He wrote a total of ninety-two dramas, [35] of which seventy-eight are extant. Of these three are spurious: *Tennes*, *Rhadamanthys* and *Perithous*. He died, according to Philochorus, when he was over seventy years old [*FGrHist* 328F220], according to Eratosthenes, seventy-five [*FGrHist* 241F12], and he was buried in Macedonia. He has a cenotaph in Athens, with an inscription on it either by Thucydides the historian or by the lyric poet Timotheus: [40] 'All Hellas is Euripides' memorial, but the land of Macedonia holds his bones, for it took in the end of his life. His fatherland was the Greece of Greece, Athens. Having brought great pleasure with his poetry he also won many men's praise' [*EG* 500ff. = *AP* 7.45]. [45] They say that both monuments were struck by lightning. They say that Sophocles, when he heard that Euripides had died, went before the public in a dark cloak and brought his chorus and actors on stage without crowns on their heads in the ceremonial parade preceding the dramatic competition, and that the citizens wept.

Euripides died in the following manner.⁶ [50] There was a

⁶ Cf. Satyr. fr. 39 col. xx 22–35: '(A) Well, these were the events of Euripides' life. The death he met was very violent and peculiar, according to the version of the oldest Macedonian story-tellers. (Diodor.) What was their account? (A) There is in Macedonia . . .'; fr. 39 col. xxi: '. . . and he begged them off. Some time afterwards Euripides happened to be alone by himself in a grove at a distance from the city, while Archelaus went out to the chase. When they were outside the gates the huntsmen loosed the hounds and sent them on in front, while they themselves were left behind. The dogs fell in with Euripides unprotected and killed him, the huntsmen arriving on the scene later. Hence they say the proverb is still in use among the Macedonians, "There is such a thing as a dog's justice".' Cf. Hermesianax 7.61–68 Powell: 'I say that that ever-watchful man, who from all . . . developed a hatred of all women from the depth of his soul, struck by Eros' bent bow could not get rid of nocturnal agonies but wandered down the back alleys of Macedonia pursuing Archelaus' housekeeper, until Fate found a death for Euripides when he encoun-

town in Macedonia called the village of the Thracians because Thracians had once settled there. At some point a female Molossian hound belonging to Archelaus had strayed into the village. This dog the Thracians, as is their custom, sacrificed and ate. Accordingly Archelaus fined them one talent. Since they did not have the money, they asked Euripides to get them released from their debt to the king. [55] Some time later, when Euripides was resting by himself in a grove near the city and Archelaus came out to hunt, his dogs were released by their keepers and fell on Euripides. The poet was torn to shreds and eaten. [60] These dogs were the descendants of the dog that was killed by the Thracians. This is the origin of the Macedonian proverb, 'a dog's justice'.

The story is that in Salamis he furnished a cave that had an opening on the sea and that he spent his days there in order to avoid the public. Because of this he drew most of his comparisons from the sea.⁷ [65] His looks were melancholy, thoughtful and severe; he hated laughter and he hated women.⁸ On that account Aristophanes found fault with him: 'to me [Euripides] seems sour to speak to.'

They say that after he married Mnesilochus' daughter Choirile and realised that she was unfaithful [70] he first wrote the play *Hippolytus*, in which he exposes women's immorality, and then he divorced her. When her next husband said: 'she is chaste in my household,' Euripides replied: 'you're a fool if you think the same woman will be chaste in one man's house

tered Arrhibus' hateful dogs' (reading *ex onychōu* at 62 with Jacobs; see A. Cameron, '*Tener Unguis*', *CQ* N.S. 15 [1965] 83). Also the *Suda*, s.v. Eur.: 'He died as a result of a plot by Arrhibius of Macedon and Crateuas of Thessaly, who were poets and envied him and persuaded Lysimachus, who was bought for ten minas, to release on Euripides the royal dogs which he had raised.'

⁷ Cf. *FGrHist* 328F219: 'Philochorus says that he had on the island of Salamis a foul and wretched cave (which we have seen) in which Euripides wrote his tragedies.' Satyr. fr. 39 col. ix: 'He was the owner of a large cave there with the mouth towards the sea, and here he passed the day by himself engaged in constant thought or writing, despising everything that was not great and elevated. Aristophanes at least says, as though summoned as a witness for this very purpose, "He is like what he makes his characters say". But once when witnessing a comedy he is said . . .'

⁸ Cf. n.10 below.

but not in another's.' [75] He took a second wife, but when he found she tended to be unchaste, he was more readily encouraged to slander women. The women planned to kill him and to come to his cave, where he spent his time writing.⁹

He was accused (enviously) of having Cephisophon as co-author of his tragedies. [80] Hermippus [fr. 94 Wehrli] also says that after Euripides' death Dionysius the tyrant of Sicily sent a talent to his heirs and got his harp, his tablet and his stylus; and when he saw them, he ordered the people who brought them to dedicate them as offerings in the temple of the Muses, and he had his own and Euripides' names inscribed on them. [85] For this reason he said he was considered a great friend of foreigners since foreigners particularly liked him, while he was hated by the Athenians. When a boorish youth said enviously that Euripides had bad breath, Euripides said: 'don't criticise me; my mouth is sweeter than honey and the Sirens.'¹⁰

[90] Euripides made fun of women in his poetry for the following reason. He had a home-bred slave named Cephisophon.¹¹ He discovered his own wife misbehaving with this boy.

⁹ Cf. n. 12 below.

¹⁰ Cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1311b30f. (tr. Jowett): 'In the conspiracy against Archelaus, Dechamnichus stimulated the fury of the assassins and led the attack; he was enraged because Archelaus had delivered him to Euripides to be scourged; for the poet had been irritated at some remark made by Dechamnichus on the foulness of his breath.' Cf. Satyr. fr. 39 col. xx 1–15: "'... his mouth is ... and extremely malodorous". "Hush boy", he interrupted, "what mouth has there been such or could be sweeter than that from which issue songs and words like his?"' Also Alex. Aetol. 7 Powell: 'Good old Anaxagoras' boarding student looks sour to me and as if he hates laughter, and he hasn't learned to joke even in his cups; but whatever he might write had been made of honey and of the Sirens.'

¹¹ Cf. Satyr. fr. 39 col. xii 16–35: 'You have clearly comprehended my meaning and absolved me from developing it. He was embittered against the sex for this reason. He had, it seems, in his house a homebred slave named Cephisophon; and he detected his wife in misconduct with this person'; fr. 39 col. xiii: '... bearing the outrage [calmly], as is related, directed the woman to live with the young man. When he was asked "What is the meaning of this?", he said, "In order that my wife may not be his, but his mine—for that is just—if I wish". And he continued to oppose the whole sex in his poetry. (Di.) Quite absurdly! For why is it more reasonable to blame women because of a seduced woman than men because of the man who seduced her? As Socrates said, the same vices and virtues are to be found in both.'

At first he tried to dissuade her, and when he couldn't convince her, he left his wife to Cephisophon. [95] Aristophanes too refers to this: 'O best and darkest Cephisophon, you lived with Euripides in a lot of ways, and you wrote his poetry (so they say) along with him' [fr. 580]. [100] They also say that women lay in ambush for him at the Thesmophoria because of his criticisms of them in his poetry.¹² They wanted to destroy him, but they spared him first because of the Muses and then because he promised never again to say anything bad about them. For example, [105] this is what he said about women in the *Melanippe*: 'In vain men shoot their criticism at women. The bow twangs and misses. Women—I say—are better than men!' [fr. 499 N] and so on. Philemon was so devoted to Euripides that he dared to say the following of him: [110] 'If it's true the dead have feeling, as some men say, then I would hang myself so I could see Euripides' [fr. 130 Kock].

Euripides was the son of Mnesarchides. He was an Athenian. The writers of Old Comedy made fun of him in their plays by calling him the son of a woman who sold vegetables. [115] Some say that at first he was a painter but that after he had studied with Archelaus the natural philosopher and with Anaxagoras he started to write tragedies. For this reason presumably he was also somewhat arrogant and kept away from ordinary people and had no interest in appealing to his audiences. [120] This practice hurt him as much as it helped Sophocles. The comic poets too attacked him and tore him to pieces in their envy.

He disregarded all this and went away to Macedonia to the

¹² Cf. Satyr. fr. 39 col. x: 'Everyone disliked him, the men because of his unsociableness, the women because of the censures in his poems. And he incurred great danger from both sexes, for he was prosecuted by Cleon the demagogue in the action for impiety mentioned above, while the women combined against him at the Thesmophoria and collected in a body at the place where he happened to be resting. But notwithstanding their anger they spared the man, partly out of respect for the Muses . . .'; fr. 39 col. xi: (a long quotation about women from Euripides' *Melanippe*; the lines quoted in the *Vita* are not included in the surviving papyrus); fr. 39 col. xii: (several lines quoted from Ar. *Thesm.* 374–75, 335–37, parodying the style of a decree) "' . . . Lysilla was the secretary, Sostrate proposed it". "If there be a man who is plotting against the womenfolk or who, to injure them, is proposing peace to Euripides and to the Medes . . .".'

court of King Archelaus,¹³ and when he was returning there late one evening he was killed by the king's dogs. He began to produce dramas around the eighty-first Olympiad, when Calliades was archon.

[125] Because he used the middle style he excelled in expression and used reasoning perfectly on either side. In his lyric poetry he was inimitable, and he elbowed virtually all the other lyric poets aside.¹⁴ But in dialogue he was wordy and vulgar and [130] irritating in his prologues, most rhetorical in his elaboration and clever in his phrasing and capable of demolishing previous arguments.

He wrote a total of ninety-two dramas, of which sixty-seven are extant and three in addition that are falsely attributed to him; also eight satyr plays, among these one that is falsely attributed to him. He won five victories.

6. THE LIFE OF ARISTOPHANES¹

Aristophanes the comic poet's father was Philippus. His nationality was Athenian, from the deme of Kydathenaion, and from the tribe of Pandionis. It was he who first is thought to have transformed comedy—which was still wandering around in the old style—into something more useful and more respect-

¹³ Cf. Satyr. fr. 39 col. xvii: 'These then, as I said, in their expression of views sought popular favour. He however, after putting in, so to speak, an obstructive plea, renounced Athens. (Di.) What was the plea? (A) It was entered in the following choral ode: "I have put wings of gold on my back, and the Sirens' winged sandals; lifted high into the wide upper air, I shall go to Zeus . . ." [fr. 911 N]; fr. 39 col. xviii: '. . . began the songs. Or do you not know that it is this that he says? (Di.) How then? (A) In saying "to mingle my flight with Zeus" he metaphorically designates the monarch and also magnifies the man's power. (Di.) What you say seems to me to be more subtle than true. (A) Take it as you like. Anyhow, he migrated and spent his old age in Macedonia, being held in much honour by the sovereign; and in particular the story is told that . . .'

¹⁴ Cf. Satyr. fr. 8: '. . . in emulation of the beauties of Ion, he developed and perfected [tragedy] so as to leave no room for improvement to his successors. Such were the man's artistic qualities. Hence Aristophanes wishes to measure his tongue "by which such fine expressions were polished".'

¹ Ed. Koster, 1975.

able. Comedy had previously been spiteful and more shameful, because the poets Cratinus and Eupolis uttered more slander than was appropriate. Aristophanes was first also to demonstrate the manner of New Comedy in his *Cocalus*, a play Menander and Philemon took as starting point for their dramatic compositions.

Since he was very cautious at the start, all the more because he was gifted, he produced his first plays under the names of Callistratus and Philonides. Because of this Aristonymus [fr. 4] and Ameipsias [fr. 28] made fun of him, saying that (as in the proverb) he was born on the fourth day, to toil for other men. [11] Later on he entered the contests for himself.

He was in particular an enemy of Cleon the demagogue and wrote the *Knights* as an attack on him. In that comedy he exposes Cleon's thefts and his tyrannical nature, and since none of the costumers had the courage to make a mask of Cleon's face because they were too frightened, since Cleon acted like a tyrant, Aristophanes acted the part of Cleon, smearing his face with red dye, and was responsible for Cleon's being fined five talents by the *Knights*, as he says in the *Archarnians*:

But one thing really made me happy: when I saw
those five talents that Cleon vomited up. [5ff.]

[20] Aristophanes had become Cleon's enemy because Cleon had entered a lawsuit against him because of his being foreign, and because in his play the *Babylonians* Aristophanes criticised the elected magistrates while foreigners were present.

Some say that he was a foreigner himself, inasmuch as some say he was a Rhodian from Lindos, others that he was an Aeginetan, an assumption based on his having spent a considerable amount of time there or on his owning property there. According to other authorities it was that his father Philippus was an Aeginetan. Aristophanes absolved himself from these charges by wittily quoting Homer's lines:

My mother says I'm his son, but I don't know myself.
For no one knows his own father. [*Od.* 1.215f.]

When he was informed against a second and third time he also got off, [30] and now that his citizenship was established he won out over Cleon. As he says, 'I myself know how I was treated by Cleon' [*Ach.* 377], etc. He was held in high regard because he got rid of the informers, whom he called Fevers in the *Wasps*, where he says 'they strangle their [?] fathers at night and choke their grandfathers' [1038–9].

People praised and liked him particularly because of his determination to show in his dramas that the government of Athens was free and not enslaved by any tyrant, and that it was a democracy and that since they were free, the people ruled themselves. [40] For this reason he won praise and a crown of sacred olive, which was considered equal in worth to a golden crown, when he spoke in the *Frogs* about the men who had been deprived of their rights:

it is just that the sacred chorus give the city
much good advice. [686ff.]

The metre called Aristophanean was named after him, since he was well known. The poet's fame was so great that it was known in Persia, and the king of the Persians asked whose side the comic poet was on. There is also the story that when Dionysius the tyrant wanted to learn about Athens' government, Plato sent Aristophanes' poetry and advised him to learn about their government by studying Aristophanes' dramas. [50] He was imitated by the writers of New Comedy, I mean Philemon and Menander. When the decree about *chorēgoi* was passed that no one could be ridiculed by name and the *chorēgoi* were no longer rich enough to provide subsidies to train choruses, and because of these measures the substance of comedy had been completely removed (the purpose of comedy being to ridicule people), Aristophanes wrote the *Cocalus* in which he introduces seduction and recognition and other such events, which Menander especially likes. When once again the subsidies for training choruses were taken away, Aristophanes, when he wrote the *Ploutos*, in order to give the actors in the scenes time to rest and to change, wrote 'for the chorus' in the directions, in the places where we see the poets of New Comedy writing in 'for the chorus' in emulation of Aristophanes.

In that drama he introduced his son Araros and so departed from life, [60] leaving three sons, Philippus (named after his grandfather), Nicostratus, and Araros. He mentions his children in these lines: 'I am ashamed before my wife and my helpless children' [fr. 588], perhaps meaning them. He wrote forty-four plays, of which it is alleged that four are spurious. These are *Poetry*, *The Shipwrecked Man*, *Islands*, [?] *Niobus*—which some authorities say are by Archippus.